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RON PEMSTEIN/BIALYSTOK, POLAND

NO "BIALYS" IN BIALYSTOK

ANNCR: BIALYSTOK IN EASTERN POLAND WAS ONCE ONE OF THE POOREST PLACES IN THE COUNTRY. BUT AS VOA'S RON PEMSTEIN FOUND ON A VISIT THERE, THINGS ARE CHANGING, AND THE PAST IS RAPIDLY BEING FORGOTTEN AS BIALYSTOK MOVES TOWARD THE 21ST CENTURY.

VOICE: IN THE UNITED STATES, THE POLISH TOWN OF BIALYSTOK IS BEST KNOWN IN NEW YORK CITY AS THE SOURCE OF THE NAME OF A HARD, CHEWY ROLL POPULAR AMONG JEWISH AND NON-JEWISH BREAD FACIERS ALIKE. THE BIALY ROLL IS A REMINDER THAT BIALYSTOK WAS ONCE A PREDOMINANTLY JEWISH WHERE POLES WERE A MINORITY. EVEN BY THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR TWO, BIALYSTOK WAS FIFTY PERCENT JEWISH.

YOU CANNOT FIND A BIALY ROLL IN BIALYSTOK TODAY. AND ALTHOUGH A HANDFUL OF JEWS STILL LIVE HERE, THE ONLY SIGN OF THEIR HISTORY IS A PLAQUE IN THE FORMER JEWISH GHETTO. THE PLAQUE NOTES THE WARTIME UPRISING BY THE TOWN'S JEWS AGAINST THE NAZI OCCUPATION.

GENERALLY THOUGH, BIALYSTOK HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN ITS HISTORY, ONLY THE FUTURE. DEPUTY GOVERNOR LEOPOLD RYBAKIEWICZ PROUDLY POINTS TO THE QUAINT, TURN-OF-THE-CENTURY COTTAGES AND ANNOUNCES THEY WILL BE TORN DOWN. A POLYTECHNICAL INSTITUTE FOR THIRTY THOUSAND STUDENTS IS PLANNED BY THE YEAR. 2000. AND THE SCHOOL WILL EXPAND ON LAND WHERE THE COTTAGES NOW SIT. WON'T YOU KEEP SOME COTTAGES FOR THE SAKE OF COMPARISON? THE DEPUTY GOVERNOR IS ASKED. AH,

VOICE: (CONT'D) THAT GIVES ME AN IDEA, HE SAYS WITH A LAUGH, INDICATING HIS LACK OF INTEREST IN PRESERVING THE PAST.

SOME ELEMENTS OF THE RUSSIAN OCCUPATION OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED YEARS STILL HAVE INFLUENCE HERE. A LOVE OF CONCERT MUSIC PERSISTS. AN ORTHODOX CHURCH AND TWO GRAMMAR SCHOOLS IN THE BYELORUSSIAN LANGUAGE OPERATE IN BIALYSTOK. THE FRAGMENT OF A TEXTILE INDUSTRY STARTED LONG AGO BY THE RUSSIANS STILL EXISTS.

BUT THIS AREA IN EASTERN POLAND WAS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S POOREST AREAS. THE SOIL FOR AGRICULTURE IS BAD AND SMALL ENTERPRISES WERE THE BASIS OF BIALYSTOK'S ECONOMY. SO THE RACE NOW IS TOWARD MODERN INDUSTRIALIZATION. THERE ARE TIMBER, ELECTRONICS AND MACHINE TOOL INDUSTRIES IN THE ONCE BACKWARD TOWN, WITH A CARPET FACTORY AND A COLOR TELEVISION COMPONENT PLANT SOON TO COME. FROM A POST-WAR POPULATION OF FORTY-THOUSAND, BIALYSTOK NOW BOASTS TWO HUNDRED FIFTEEN THOUSAND.

AN OLD PALACE, WRECKED DURIN THE WAR, HAS BEEN REBUILT. IT NOW HOUSES A MEDICAL ACADEMY. THE CITY'S PRIDE AND JOY IS THE TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY NOW UNDER CONSTRUCTION. FOR THIS TO BE A UNIVERSITY TOWN, MISTER RYBAKIEWICZ SAYS, MAKES ME MOST PROUD BECAUSE THIS WAS A GREAT LACK BEFORE THE WAR.

AND WHILE THERE ARE NO BIALY ROLLS, AT LEAST THE BREAD IN THIS AREA FAR EXCEEDS IN QUALITY ANY BREAD YOU CAN BUY IN WARSAW.

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WJL/RCS